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PSYCHOLOGY AND SCIENTIFIC METHODS

THE OBJECTS OF VALUATION

IN an earlier number of this JOURNAL,¹ I presented a theory about valuation-judgments. In so doing, I intentionally put to one side the question of the nature of value. I did not wish to add further complication by introducing a subject about which so much difference of opinion already existed. It seemed to me that it was theoretically possible to distinguish the logical or formal aspect of valuation from the nature of value in the same way in which it is possible to distinguish the logical form of, say, a descriptive judgment from the particular subject-matter described, or an asymmetrical transitive relation from the question as to whether the relation concerns a spatial, temporal or numerical series. I still think this distinction of problems is logically sound, but intervening discussions have changed my mind about its availability at the present time. Consequently, I hope at a later time to take up a discussion of the nature of value itself. Just now I want, however, to take advantage of some of the recent discussions to show wherein I failed to make clear the primary point of my theory. I shall use selections from the articles of Mr. Perry² and Mr. Bush as texts upon which to hang certain comments.

Mr. Perry says: "Suppose a situation in which I suffer from ill-health and hope to recover through the agency of a physician. There are several items in this situation which must be distinguished. I suffer from ill-health, and am aware that I dislike it. I desire recovery and am aware that I desire it. I believe that consulting a physician conduces to recovery. I adopt the course of consulting a physician, as a course conducive to my recovery. . . . Subsequently, because of what I dislike, desire and believe, I do consult the physician, and, thereupon, in consequence of having consulted the physician, I recover. . . . But there is no case of a value's being constituted by a judgment of it."

¹ Vol. XII., pp. 512-523, since reprinted with some additions in my *Essays in Experimental Logic*, pp. 349-389.

² This JOURNAL, Vol. XIV., No. 7, Dewey and Urban on Valued Judgments, the quotation being from pp. 173-174.

Now on the basis of the particular situation described by Mr. Perry I quite agree. According to the terms of the illustration, there is already in determinate existence a negative value, ill-health, there is also a determinate positive value, recovery (which, of course, is none the less determined for knowledge because it does not as yet physically exist). In addition to these intrinsic, immediate, or independent values, as they are variously termed by different writers, there is also a determined instrumental, or dependent, value: seeing the physician is serviceable, useful, valuable, *for* the positive value of health. Nothing could be clearer or more satisfactory. The most that a deliberative judgment could effect under such circumstances would be to assist in bringing into *physical* existence a value already, as value, given. And only an extreme bungler could confuse the assistance given by judgment in bringing a value into existence with that given by judgment in determining a value as such.

Of that particular bungling performance I plead not guilty. It might be a purely verbal matter to say that I do not conceive that propositions *about* values already given *as* values are valuation judgments at all, whether they are about value as immediate or about value in the sense of useful, any more than I should wish to term a judgment about a pin a pin-judgment. In such a case as that stated above, there is nothing whatever to mark off any distinctive logical type of judgment. If we call such judgments valuation-judgments, they are on precisely the same logical level as any propositions about matters of established fact. I can not make it too emphatic that I started out, so far *as respects cases of this kind*, from precisely the point of view maintained by Mr. Perry.

But there remains a question of fact, a question which is not concerned with the proper linguistic use of the term valuation or value-judgment. Are there not situations in which, while a man dislikes ill-health, it is not, *under the specific circumstances*, the object of his supreme dislike, and where, moreover, he does not know *what* he should supremely dislike and supremely desire? Are there not situations wherein the adequate data for settling a determinate like and dislike *can not* be had until after an act which issues from a preliminary estimate or valuation as to what the good *will* be? This does not mean that health has not been a good in the past, or that it is not a good "in general." It means that there may be a case in which an agent is genuinely uncertain whether to desire—or like—the recovery of health or to desire making a medical discovery at the cost of his own health. In such cases there is no good or value given to judgment; whether the good be recovery of health or loss-of-health-along-with-increase-of-reputation-and-a-medical-discovery-to-aid-others is genuinely unsettled. Now it was of this sort of situation

and of this only that I contended that valuations aid in determining a new good; and contended that *such* valuations possess a distinctive logical character which the orthodox logics have passed over too lightly. Now either or both of these convictions may be wrong, but their error can hardly be shown until the prior question has been raised: Are there situations such that it is objectively uncertain what *their* good, value or end is—it being understood that their good *if* determinately given would be an intrinsic and immediate good? After this question has been dealt with, the question of the nature of the judgment of valuation (estimation or appraisal) involved in them will naturally follow.³

The passage from Mr. Bush is as follows:⁴ "The city of Syracuse has a very beautiful institution. The state fair is held there every autumn, and on the evening of the last day there is a parade of all the city's children. The people of Syracuse regard this parade with an almost passionate affection. It seems natural to say that they value it supremely. Does value really attach to things like this or to the means used to bring them about? Of course, it is a verbal question, but it is a question that takes us to considerations where instrumentalism is no longer a sufficient point of view."

As in the case of the former quotation, I can only express my unqualified agreement—except that instrumentalism is not so much insufficient as grossly impertinent, irrelevant. It would be, as Mr. Bush intimates, a purely verbal matter to say that in such cases no valuing at all occurs. Yet such a verbal approach might be one way of getting at a fact, namely, that no valuing occurs in the sense of reflective comparison, an inquiry which involves deliberating, weighing one consideration against another. This might be a rhetorical

³ It is possible, though I am not sure, that I might make my point in terms of Mr. Perry's own thinking by reference to his theory of the "objective" of judgments involving belief or commital. See this JOURNAL, Vol. XIII., pp. 569-573. It seems reasonable to suppose that there are cases of genuine doubt as to what the "objective" *should* be, as to what the purport or deliverance of an entertained belief *better* be. In such a case, if we employ reflection, if we make a judgment to decide upon an "objective" as a precondition of applying that "objective" in a further judgment, there is found, I fancy, a kind of judgment logically similar to that which I was dealing. When Mr. Perry in the same connection says that the "pragmatic theory is correct in emphasizing the formative, creative action of mind, and in likening the cognitive situation to the desiderative or volitional situation" (p. 572), and yet in a later article takes such pains to deny any formative action on the part of thought in constituting the object of a desiderative situation, I confess myself perplexed. I get the feeling that he has left his older opinion about the nature of valuation-judgment untouched by his revision of his theory of belief-judgment, and that if he applied his latter theory to the former topic it would inevitably result in a view of valuation not incompatible with that which I set forth.

⁴ This JOURNAL, Vol. XV., No. 4, pp. 95-96.

way of getting at the fact that to the citizens the object is in-valuable, that is to say one whose worth is not subjected to critical questioning. The citizens value it "supremely" not in the sense that after considering and comparing any number of things they have arrived at a definitive scale in which the procession outweighs all other goods, but in the sense that they unreservedly, without any questioning, prize and cherish the institution.

So far there is, I take it, no difference of opinion between Mr. Bush and myself; he recognizes as explicitly as any one could desire that I expressly drew a distinction between the non-cognitive act of prizing, finding good or dear, and the cognitive act of valuation. But he goes on to ask whether in making this distinction "the word value does not become synonymous, in the instrumentalist presentation, with the word use." And if such be the case, why not, as Mr. Bush pertinently asks, drop the word value and confine one's self to the term use or valuable? And he goes on to interpret my position as meaning "value occurs when we face the question, What things or methods have the value of utility under the circumstances?"

Just here is where I entirely failed to make myself comprehensible to Mr. Bush. Just how far the obscurity of my exposition is the cause I can not well judge; if my exposition as a whole gave Mr. Bush this impression, I express my appreciation of his tenderness in dealing with an account which is complicated and prolix to no other end than to arrive at a result which can be stated in a few sentences and with which, as he says, no one would disagree. Possibly the term "instrumentalism" itself suggests that judgments are held to be about instruments or means; possibly calling a judgment of valuation a practical judgment suggests, in the current implications of the word practical, the same idea. If so, both suggestions are quite misleading. The instrumental theory of judgment does not mean that judgment is about instruments; it refers to the *function* of all judgment *qua* judgment, not to the subject-matter of some judgments. In any case, the emphasis was put not upon the instrumental, but upon the *experimental* character of valuations. It may well be that the primary linguistic connotation of the term "practical" is useful; unfortunately we have no unambiguous words in this connection. But I tried to make it clear that by "practical" I meant *what* is to be done, rather than *how* to accomplish something already given as a satisfactory end. Judgments about means, so far as they do not themselves enter into judgment about the constitution of an end or good,⁵ are, I should say, technical rather than

⁵ See *Essays in Experimental Logic*, pp. 340-344, and pp. 358-362 for cases in which valuation of means and of ends, respectively, are two ways of getting at the same thing.

practical; by which I mean that our important practical inquiries concern ends and goods.

This brings me, of course, to exactly the point which I made in discussing the passage from Mr. Perry. Sometimes every immediate or intrinsic good goes back on us. We do not confront any indubitable good. We are in the dark as to what we *should* regard with passionate esteem; we are beginning to suspect that something which we prized unquestioningly and directly in the past is no longer worth our while, because of some growth on our part or some change in conditions. Now in such a state of affairs we may of course trust to luck; we may wait for something to turn up which will afford a new unquestioned object to cherish and hold to. But sometimes we attempt to further by means of deliberation the production of such a good. We search in order to form an estimate of what would be the good of the situation if we could attain it. Add to these conditions the further condition that we can not be *sure* that we shall prize or like the thing in question until it has been brought into existence by an act following upon a judgment, and we have before us the kind of situation with which I was concerned. It frequently happens that, being in uncertainty, I conclude after consideration that the best thing that I can do is so and so—in short, that if I act so as to bring certain consequences into existence I *shall* like them or find them good. But when I act and the consequences follow, I do not relish them at all. Now this, I submit, is a very different sort of thing from discovering that I have made a mistake in my judgment as to the useful means of accomplishing something. It means that I have made a mistake in my valuation of an immediate good—that is of what, *when it is brought into existence*, will be an immediate good—or bad.

Let us return to the illustration of Mr. Bush. It is conceivable that some citizen of Syracuse who had habitually regarded the procession with passionate regard, might be led to question its worth. He might learn that a number of children had been made ill, or become seriously over-excited, or were becoming over-fond of display for sake of attracting attention to themselves. This would not alter what was past, his former liking, the fact that he *had* experienced an immediate, independent good. But it would lead him to a new act of valuation; he would seriously question whether he is henceforth to regard the parade with liking, hesitation or repugnance. He might attempt to use his judgment to come to a reasoned conclusion in the matter, and might then try to arrange so that the next parade would not involve these obnoxious features. Or he might attempt to arrange some other function giving the opportunity for an immediate realization of the beauty of congregated child-life. In any case, the

result when it occurs will be an immediate good or bad—a matter of direct liking or the reverse. But, none the less, it will have been constituted, in part,⁶ by the prior valuation—the prior reflective estimate of a non-instrumental good.

I should be glad to think that this explanation, if I have succeeded in making anything plain, would evoke an opinion that if this is what is meant, nobody will disagree. But I am not sanguine that such will be the case. For my view goes contrary to the classic view not only as to the logic of all judgments, but of moral and political conceptions. For the prevailing view is that goods, ends, “values” are all given, given in the sense of being completely there for knowledge, provided only we could get at them. Disputes in ethical and social theory have concerned themselves for the most part only with the question of *where* and *how* the goods are given: whether in experience, feeling, sensation, or in thought, intuition, reason; whether in the subject or in the object; whether in nature or in some transcendental realm. The important fact (provided it be a fact) that serious inquiries into conduct, individual and collective, must be concerned with an hypothetical and experimental effort to bring *new* goods into existence, an attempt made necessary by the slipping away of all given determinate goods, fails to secure recognition. I console with a belief that while my own inexpertness in statement is largely responsible for my failure to make myself understood, some of the difficulty lies with the immensely difficult transformation in methods of thinking about all social matters which the theory implies.

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BEHAVIOR

IF usage is properly based upon etymology, the word behavior may be applied to any observed change in a given object, under certain more or less clearly observable conditions. Thus the physicist may well speak of the behavior of the X-rays in the presence of a magnetic field; and the chemist is warranted in telling us that “the behavior of the nitrous salts of the amines is worthy of attention.” We are thus referring to characteristics of what we speak of as the objective world.

The word is so commonly applied to living animal objects, however, that this application is usually taken for granted in ordinary

⁶ I have never said that judgment is the *sole* determinant of a new object, but only that it serves to *reconstruct* or *reorganize*, which implies another and independent variable.